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Economic and Social Council

Provisional

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Organizational session for 2006

Provisional summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 January 2006, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. Akram. . . . . (Pakistan)
President: Mr. Hachani . . . . . (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary President** declared open the organizational session for 2006 of the Economic and Social Council.

Statement by the Temporary President

2. **The Temporary President** said that in 2005, a momentous year for the Organization as a whole, the Council had carried out intense and productive activities of its own, with a focus on making a substantial contribution to the 2005 World Summit and recovering a role as principal organ of the United Nations for economic and social affairs.

3. The conclusions of the Council's 2005 substantive session, to which the world leaders attending the Summit had listened, had been clear. First, as the report on the Millennium Project, the Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" and the World Bank Global Economic Prospects had confirmed, many countries would fail to achieve the Millennium Development Goals unless international and national efforts were stepped up. Second, the Millennium Development Goals must be pursued together with the other internationally agreed development goals established at major United Nations conferences and summits. Third, many developing countries could not achieve the Millennium Development Goals or other internationally agreed development goals without continued international development cooperation and needed more official development assistance and debt relief. Fourth, security and development were inextricably linked: without peace and security, the Millennium Development Goals would be out of reach, and without rapid economic and social development, peace and security would be eroded. Fifth, the international community must provide a comprehensive and coordinated response to increasingly frequent natural and man-made humanitarian emergencies. Sixth, the Council was able to play a central role in promoting the international development agenda, and must be strengthened to enable it to fulfil effectively the functions assigned to it in the Charter of the United Nations.

4. The 2005 World Summit had decided to reinforce the existing mandates of the Council and to add new mandates, including holding annual ministerial-level substantive reviews, promoting global policy dialogue, convening a Development Cooperation Forum and holding special sessions on humanitarian emergencies. The Council, meanwhile, had resolved to use existing mechanisms to revitalize its work, for example, by adding to the high-level segment of the 2005 substantive session the theme of "voices against poverty" and by holding special events on matters such as avian influenza and food crises in Africa.

5. The Council had addressed the enduring challenge of making its work more widely known by involving Governments, United Nations agencies, international institutions, civil society and the private sector in its activities more than ever before in 2005. Despite such efforts, there was much work to do to translate the Council's new mandates into action. That task was made more difficult by the requirement that the Council should operate within existing resources. In his own view, that approach would hamper action in the economic and social fields not just for the Council, but for the United Nations as a whole.

6. In order to restore the Council to a position at the apex of economic and social governance in the international system, the General Assembly should adopt clear and specific decisions on reform of the Council, the implementation of the Organization's development agenda and fulfilment of the commitments made by world leaders at the 2005 Summit. However, it was up to the Council itself to turn recognition of its role into an operational reality. He was confident that, despite the criticism and scepticism expressed, the political will to support the Organization and the Council would be restored.

Election of the President

7. **The Temporary President** said that, under rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, in 2006 it was the turn of the group of African States to occupy the post of President. Consequently, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to elect Mr. Ali Hachani to the office of President.

8. *Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) was elected President by acclamation.*

9. *Mr. Hachani took the Chair.*

Statement by the President

10. **The President** said that the Organization's sixtieth anniversary and the 2005 World Summit had set the course for a renewal which had entered its implementation phase. Although the Council had never fulfilled the potential of the role it had been given in the Charter, the 2005 World Summit had provided impetus by assigning the Council new functions and mandates to advance the broader United Nations development agenda, which would be the subject of an annual ministerial-level substantive review intended not as a one-off event, but rather as a continuous process with medium- to long-term goals. The 2005 World Summit's call for the Council to promote broad policy dialogue provided an opportunity for open discussion with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and representatives of the private sector and academia, which should be exploited immediately. The proposed biennial Development Cooperation Forum was an innovation, as there was currently no opportunity to discuss multilateral, bilateral and South-South cooperation with all relevant development actors. The Council should begin preparing for the first Forum as rapidly as possible.

11. The high-level segment of the 2006 substantive session of the Council, centring on "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development", was directly relevant to the General Assembly high-level dialogue which would follow it and would focus on international migration and development. There were new issues to consider: labour mobility and opportunities, the rights of migrant workers and migration of skilled workers — and the associated phenomenon of brain drain — in a globalized environment.

12. The events of 2005 had shown how natural disasters could cause humanitarian crises and reverse progress towards long-term development goals. As the Council was uniquely positioned to promote improved, coordinated disaster response from the United Nations and its partners, it must continue to improve its abilities in that regard, ensuring that it received information rapidly from across the United Nations system but taking care not to encroach on the duties of other United Nations bodies. A further recently acquired mandate which must be implemented and monitored was the responsibility for following up the decisions of the World Summit on the Information Society, in order to harness the potential of information and communication technologies to advance development.

13. As the 2005 World Summit had achieved a global consensus that development, peace and security were interrelated, the Council must continue to make progress in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. It must develop ways of working with the Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 60/180, to promote an integrated approach to peace and development. That would be a particular challenge for the seven Council members which would also be members of the Commission.

14. The year ahead would be crucial for reforms to improve the work of the Organization. Having arrived at a global consensus on development goals and objectives, Member States were closer than ever to achieving a unified framework for international development cooperation, and had agreed that those goals required coherent, consistent and coordinated action.

15. The Council's main challenge was to seize the opportunities offered to it by the 2005 World Summit, further its ability to act responsibly and efficiently, and improve the performance and coordination of its subsidiary bodies. It must translate the mandates from the World Summit into action with the same level of ambition that world leaders demonstrated in setting them, and become the vehicle for building political momentum for, and monitoring implementation of, development goals.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

16. **Mr. Eliasson** (President of the General Assembly) said that the Council's work had done a great deal to build momentum and understanding among delegations on matters central to the development agenda. That work had led up to a World Summit at which important development commitments had been made, including commitments to substantially increase the flow of resources to developing countries. Members had also been given a glimpse of what a revitalized and more responsive Council could offer when the special meetings on avian flu and the African food crisis had taken place, and when the humanitarian

segment had held a high-level panel discussion on lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami.

17. Just as 2005 was a year of commitments, 2006 would be a year of implementation. On the development agenda in particular, but also in the other areas of the Council's work, much remained to be done. One of the urgent tasks for the General Assembly in that regard was to conclude its negotiations on the resolutions on Council reform and follow-up to the World Summit decisions on development issues, which would enable the Council to begin preparing a reformed 2006 programme of work. It was important for the Council to have a clear mandate for reform before it held its organizational session. The reformed Council would be a vital mechanism for ensuring that all development commitments made, prior to, and in 2005, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, were followed up and implemented.

18. The Council had the best chance in years to enhance its standing through the promotion of global policy dialogue, the holding of an annual ministerial-level substantive review, the convening of a Development Cooperation Forum and special sessions on humanitarian emergencies. Indeed, members must ensure that 2006 was remembered as a year in which the Council had fulfilled its potential and become a decisive player in driving forward the development agenda. With the range of actors and the scope of issues in the development field currently so wide, the other element of Council reform — coordination of United Nations system activities — was also of the utmost importance for a strengthened United Nations.

Election of the Bureau

19. **The President** said that rule 18 of its rules of procedure provided for the Council to elect four Vice-Presidents. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by each regional group.

20. *Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) and Mr. Serkšnys (Lithuania) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council for 2006 by acclamation.*

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

21. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the incoming President had played a critical role in the success of the World Summit on the Information Society, especially during its second phase in Tunis, thereby making him a major asset to the Council in its new role in the follow-up to the Summit and in advancing the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits.

22. The 2005 World Summit had made it abundantly clear that the Council's raison d'être was to help drive implementation of the internationally agreed development goals and that 2006 would be a crucial year. The General Assembly was poised to conclude its deliberations on how to implement the World Summit decisions on development issues and Council reform. Council members, for their part, must ensure that the Council discharged its functions, old and new, as effectively as possible. For that purpose, they must take a broad strategic perspective on how those functions reinforced and related to one another, particularly with respect to the mission of helping Member States to achieve their development goals.

23. The decision to conduct annual ministerial-level reviews provided the Council with a mechanism for a truly unified approach to tracking and evaluating progress towards those goals. The annual reviews would best be placed in advance of the global policy dialogue and Development Cooperation Forum, to be held in alternate years. Through both the policy dialogue and the Forum, the Council could strengthen its engagement with the actors within and beyond the United Nations system and provide an indispensable instrument for achieving a high-level, collective focus on key development issues. The Forum itself could break new ground in promoting coherence in global development cooperation by engaging a range of actors dealing with North-South, South-South and bilateral cooperation.

24. The Council had also been called upon to anticipate and respond to emergencies that could impede or undermine progress towards the development goals. It would need to tap its unique potential for coordinating the development efforts of the United Nations system and for engaging its many non-governmental stakeholders and partners. The work of the panel launched by the Secretary-General to study

system-wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment was important in that regard.

25. The World Summit decisions had provided new momentum for the work of the United Nations in development. With the new Council functions, it would now be possible for the intergovernmental process to monitor and evaluate progress in much greater depth and to realign the Council's efforts accordingly. The General Assembly would be able to build on that momentum in its overall review of follow-up to the Millennium Declaration as a whole, thereby conferring importance on development as one of the three pillars of United Nations efforts alongside, and in mutual reinforcement of, peace and security and human rights.

26. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group of 77 and China was committed to making the Council a more effective body for coordination and policy review and dialogue, as agreed at the 2005 World Summit, and would fully support the Council in following up on the decisions taken at the Summit.

27. **Mr. Pfanzelter** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that 2006 marked an important year for the Council in following up on the World Summit. The European Union was committed to implementing the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening the Council.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2006/1 and Corr.1, E/2006/2, E/2006/11, E/2006/12 and E/2006/46)

28. **The President** drew attention to document E/2006/46, which contained a letter from the representative of the United States of America requesting the inclusion of an item entitled "Adaptation of the organization of work, the agenda and the current methods of work of the Economic and Social Council" in the provisional agenda of the organizational session.

29. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, requested more time to consider the United States request.

30. **Mr. Mally** (United States of America), referring to paragraph 156 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, said that the inclusion of the proposed agenda item should pose no problems to delegations since it fit in with the expressed wish of Members to adapt work programmes in the special meetings of the General Assembly on reform of the Council and development.

31. **The President**, suggested that a decision on E/2006/46 should be deferred and invited the Council to adopt the provisional agenda (E/2005/2), as amended.

32. *The provisional agenda, as orally amended, was adopted.*

33. **The President** announced that, by adopting resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, the Council had decided to take certain measures designed to revitalize and improve its functioning. The General Assembly, in resolutions 45/264, 48/162, 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B, had also approved measures to restructure and revitalize the Council.

34. On the basis of the guidelines set out in those resolutions, the Council would consider at its organizational session the provisional agenda for the organizational session for 2006 (E/2006/2), as it would be amended following discussion of the proposed item by the United States of America, and the proposed basic programme of work of the Council for 2006 and 2007 (E/2006/1 and Corr.1). In addition, the matters listed in the provisional agenda required the adoption of measures at the organizational session.

35. In conformity with the provisions of paragraph 2 (l) of Council resolution 1988/77, informal consultations would be held on the proposed basic programme of work and other organizational matters. On the basis of those consultations, the Bureau would submit recommendations to the Council at a future meeting.

36. Turning to the question of seating arrangements for delegations, he proposed that, as in the past, lots should be drawn to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat.

37. The delegation of Costa Rica was selected to take the first seat.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.